

eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 3, Issue 5: : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
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Murkowski Visits Military and VA Health Care Facilities in Alaska

In recent weeks we've all read about the deficiencies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Many Alaskans have written to tell me that the conditions some of our servicemen and servicewomen had to endure were unacceptable and I agree with you.

I devoted three days of the Easter Senate recess to visiting VA and military healthcare facilities in Alaska. Senior leaders from the Joint Alaska Command, the Army, the Air Force, the Alaska National Guard and the VA joined me on these visits. The primary goal was to ensure that the sorts of deficiencies that have been identified at Walter Reed and in some other federal health facilities around the country did not occur in Alaska. I concluded that the facilities in Alaska are sound and staffed in many cases by world class providers.

I also wanted to know whether the military and VA healthcare delivery systems in Alaska are prepared to address the needs of servicemen and servicewomen returning from Iraq, including returning members of the Alaska National Guard. I remain concerned about the number of trips that veterans who live outside of Anchorage need to take to receive care at the Seattle and Anchorage VA facilities. Providing care in rural parts of the State will be a challenge and we have a lot of work to do as an Alaskan community to ensure that our returning Guard members enjoy a seamless transition to civilian life.



Senator Murkowski examines plans for a new clinic on Fort Richardson.

Murkowski and Stevens Introduce Legislation to Streamline Approval of an Alaska Gasline

Senator Stevens and I recently introduced legislation to allow the Office of the Federal Pipeline Coordinator to more efficiently conduct its work. The bill provides more flexibility in hiring personnel, allows the Federal Coordinator to establish reasonable filing and service fees, and clarifies the intent of the Natural Gas Pipeline Act regarding litigation.

In 2004, Congress provided tax credits and loan guarantees to improve chances for construction of an Alaska gas pipeline system. Additionally, Congress created the Office of Federal Pipeline Coordinator to oversee the 15 federal agencies that will have a role to play in construction and financing of a pipeline system. Congress also set up a streamlined permitting and expedited court review process to limit unnecessary delays in the project.

This legislation will make certain that the Federal government continues to be ready to work with potential contractors and the State of Alaska through the permitting process needed to construct a gasline. The project is too important for our nation's energy security and Alaska's economy to be delayed.

Senate Passes Amendment to Extend Secure Rural Schools Act

Before the Easter recess the Senate added an amendment to the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill that would extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act for five years. Senator Stevens and I were original cosponsors of the amendment which was offered by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR). Secure Rural Schools provides a dedicated funding stream for local municipalities and school districts dependent on forest timber receipts that have been unable to rely on consistent and sustainable payments due the continued controversy over timber sales in National Forests.

While the fate of the bill is uncertain due to a threat of a Presidential veto, I am encouraged that the Senate has taken this step to support an extension of the program in a bipartisan vote of 75-24. This will enable us to continue to push for a legislative fix as we move through the session.

Our timber policy in the United States has prohibited communities surrounded by National Forests from having the opportunity to have sustainable economic growth. Until we allow for a sustainable timber industry, the extension of payments through Secure Rural Schools will provide schools districts and communities the revenue they desperately need.



Southeast communities like Hoonah rely on Secure Rural Schools funding.

Senator Murkowski Addresses Troop Extension

Once again, our Nation's senior defense leaders have called upon the families of our active duty soldiers to muster all of their strength and courage and accept an extension of the period their loved ones will serve in overseas deployment. My heart goes out to the parents, spouses, children, and friends of all of those who are affected by the announcement. Our Nation owes a debt of gratitude to our military families whose sacrifices at home are no less integral to the defense of our freedoms than the work of their loved ones on the battlefield.

My resolve to ensure that our senior military leaders will do all that they can to help our military families through the difficult days that may follow has not weakened since the return of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team last December after a 16 month deployment. The military maintains that they learned a great many lessons from the support that they provided to our Fort Wainwright families during that extended deployment. Their challenge is to provide that same level of support on Army posts nationwide. Our military families deserve no less.

As always, my office is available to assist our military families in every way possible. My constituent service offices in Anchorage and Wasilla have been working with Fort Richardson families since this deployment began and will continue to do so. Military families that wish to contact me directly should do so by visiting [the contact section of my website](#).

[For video of Senator Murkowski's full remarks click here.](#)

[For audio click here.](#)

IPY Youth Steering Committee (YSC) Launches Website

The YSC's new website is up and running at www.ipyyouth.org. This site is equipped with the ability for youth to discuss polar issues, to post podcasts, to design their own local projects, to recruit members, and to highlight their efforts through their own project pages. The site also highlights upcoming events and contains a Google Maps image showing where members of the site are from.

IRS Offers Last-Minute Tips for Taxpayers

With the April 17 tax filing deadline days away, the IRS offers some tips for those still working on their paper tax forms. Those are:

- Consider filing electronically instead of using paper tax forms
- Put all required Social Security numbers on the return
- Double-check your figures
- Sign your form
- Attach all required schedules
- Send your return or request an extension by the April filing deadline

Forms and publications and helpful information on a variety of tax subjects are available around the clock on the IRS Web site at IRS.gov.



Senator Murkowski visits with Alaskan Katherine Bowlus and other Cherry Blossom Princesses.

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